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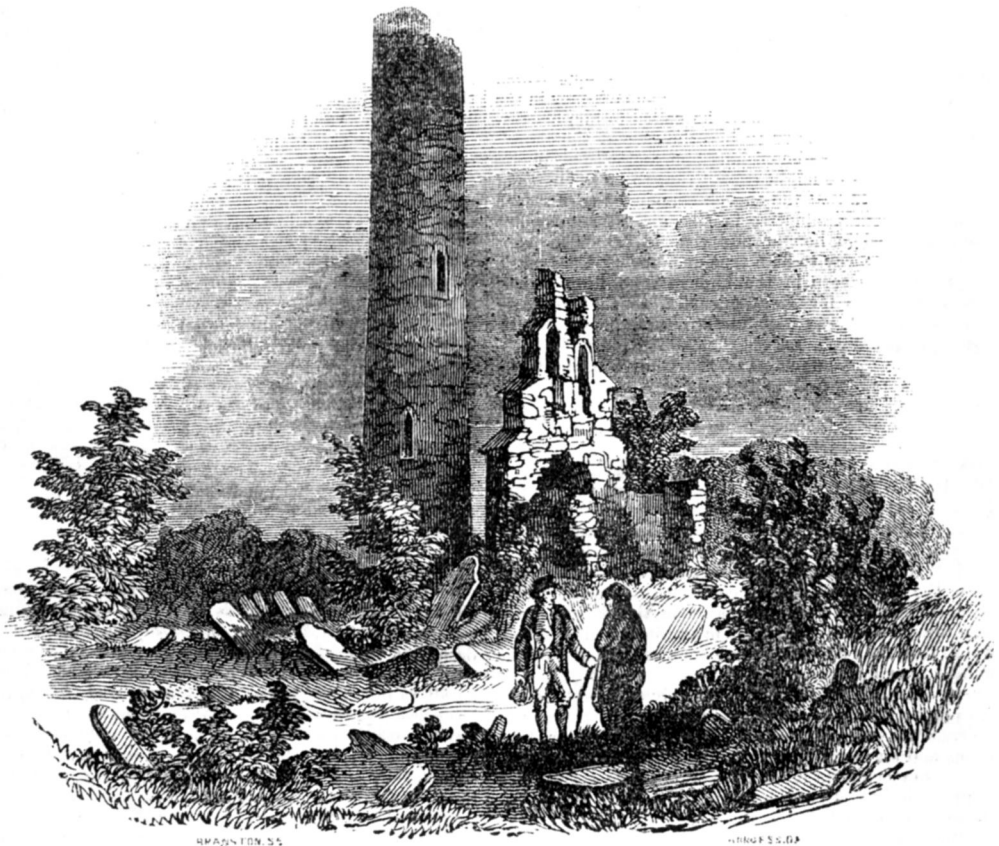
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# THE IRISH PENNY JOURNAL.

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VOLUME I.



## THE CHURCH AND ROUND TOWER OF DONAGHMORE, COUNTY OF MEATH.

ENGLISH and other visitors to our metropolis who dare the perils of the deep, and various other perils now equally imaginary, to see something of our Emerald Isle, are generally directed as a matter of course to our far-famed county of Wicklow as the only picturesque lion within a few hours' journey; and certainly in this romantic region they will find much to gratify the taste, and which will remain indelibly fixed on the memory. But, delightful as such excursion undoubtedly is, it will only convey to a stranger's mind a partial and imperfect impression of Irish scenery; and he will be apt to conclude that however rich we may be in the possession of lakes and mountains—the grand but solitary domains of nature—we are wholly wanting in scenery of a different class, that of the richly wooded pastoral valley, blooming with artificial as well as natural beauty, the anciently chosen abodes of luxury and rank, and, as such, rich in memorials of the past, with their attendant historical associations. Scenery such as this, the proud Briton will most probably think the exclusive boast of his own favoured isle. He will not imagine that it is also to be found in equal perfection in Ireland, and even within a short distance of the metropolis. It is not in the Guide or Tour

Book, and is but little known even to the well informed of the citizens of Dublin themselves, more of whom have seen and enjoyed the scenery of the Thames than that of the Boyne, which is within four hours' journey. Yet the scenery of the Boyne, following its course upwards from Drogheda to Navan, a distance of eleven miles, and the scenery of the Blackwater, a river tributary to the Boyne, ascending from Navan to Kells, a distance of eight miles more, is, in its way, of a character as beautiful and luxuriant as could be found anywhere, or even be imagined. Scenery of this class of equal richness may be often found in England; but we do not know of any river's course of the same length in which natural beauty so happily combines with the artificial, or in which so many interesting memorials of past ages could be found. Scattered in rich profusion along the banks of this beautiful river we find the noblest monuments of the various races of men who have held sway in Ireland: the great earthen fortresses, stone circles and dome-roofed sepulchres of the Tuatha de Dananns and the Fir-Bolgs—the raths of the Milesians—the churches and round towers of the earliest Christian times—the proud castles of the Anglo-Norman chiefs and their equally imposing

architectural structures dedicated to the services of religion. In the variety, if not the number of such monuments here found, the Boyne is without a rival in any Irish river, nor do we think it could be paralleled by any river in the empire; and we might truly add, that it is on its luxuriant banks, amid so many instructive memorials of past ages, that the history of our country, as traced in its monuments would be best studied.

It is from amongst these interesting remains that we have selected the subject of our prefixed illustration—the Church and Round Tower of Donaghmore, situated a little more than a mile from Navan, on the road to Slane.

This religious establishment, which was anciently called *Domnach-mor muighe Echnach*, owes its origin to St Patrick, as will appear from the following passage translated from the life of the Irish apostle, attributed to St Evin:—

“While the man of God was baptising the people called Luaigni, at a place where the church of Domnach-mor in the plain of Echnach stands at this day, he called to him his disciple Cassanus, and committed to him the care of the church recently erected there, preadmonishing him, and with prophetic mouth predicting that he might expect that to be the place of his resurrection; and that the church committed to his care would always remain diminutive in size and structure, but great and celebrated in honour and veneration. The event has proved this prophecy to be a true one, for St Cassanus’s relics are there to be seen in the highest veneration among the people, remarkable for great miracles, so that scarcely any of the visitors go away without recovering health, or receiving other gifts of grace sought for.”—Tr. Th. p. 130.

But though the existing ruins of the Church of Donaghmore sufficiently indicate it to have been a structure “diminutive in size,” its architectural features clearly prove that it is not the original church of St Patrick’s erection, but a re-edification of the thirteenth century, in the usual style of the parish churches erected by the Anglo-Norman settlers within the Pale. Neither can the Round Tower, though unquestionably a structure of much higher antiquity than the present church, be referred to the time of the Irish apostle, or perhaps to an earlier age than the ninth or tenth century. At all events, its erection cannot be ascribed to an earlier date than that of the Tower of the Church of Kells—a religious establishment founded by St Columbkille in the sixth century—as these towers so perfectly agree in architectural style and masonwork, that they appear to have been constructed by the same architects or builders.

This very beautiful tower is built entirely of limestone undressed, except around the doorway and other apertures, and is of admirable masonry. It has two projecting ledges or steps at its base, and six rests for stories, with intermediate projecting stones or brackets in its interior. These stories are each, as usual, lighted by a single aperture, with the exception of the upper one, which has two openings, one facing the east, and the other the west; and the apertures present all the architectural varieties of form observable in our most ancient churches. The circumference of this tower, near its base, is 66 feet 6 inches, and its height, to the slant of the roof, which is wanting, is about 100 feet. The wall is 3 feet 9 inches in thickness, and the doorway is 12 feet from the ground. This doorway—which is of very beautiful execution, and, as usual, faces the west end of the church—is 5 feet 2 inches in height, and has inclined sides, and a semicircularly arched top. It is 2 feet 3 inches wide at bottom, and 2 feet beneath the spring of the arch at top. Over the door there is a figure of the Saviour sculptured in relief, partly on the key-stone and partly on the stone over it; and on each side of the architrave there is a human head also in relief, as on the doorway of the church of Kells.

Some antiquaries, in their zeal to support the theory of the Pagan origin and the antiquity of the Round Towers, have asserted that this doorway is not the original one, but an “after work.” But there is not the slightest ground for such a supposition, and this sculpture, as a profoundly skilled architectural antiquary, the late Sir Richard Colt Hoare, well observed, furnishes “a decided proof that these buildings were not (as some writers have conjectured) built by the Pagans.”

A similar argument against the application of the Round Towers to the purposes of a belfry, has been grounded on the circumstance of the western front of the church having three apertures for bells above its gable. But it should not be forgotten that this structure has no claim to an earlier date than

the thirteenth century, when a variety of bells, and a different mode of hanging them, were brought into use by the Anglo-Norman settlers.

The Church of Donaghmore has been confounded by Archdall and subsequent writers with the ancient church of Donagh-Tortain, also founded by St Patrick, but which was situated near Ardbraccan. P.

## THE DRUNKARDS,

A TOO TRUE STORY.

IN one of those admirable tales which Mrs Hall is now publishing with the praiseworthy object of the melioration of the Irish character, the ordinary effects of a too faint resistance to the fascinations of strong drink are faithfully detailed. The moral which our generous countrywoman intended to convey is undoubtedly of universal application, but I am afraid that the circumstances I am about to relate will convey no moral. It is the simple and true record of an appalling calamity which befell the subjects of my story, with all the melancholy unaccountableness and fatality of lunacy. No one would warn his fellow-creatures against the danger of madness—against any unforeseen dispensation of God’s wrath: it is in this sense, then, that I am afraid I have no moral to convey in narrating an event of which I was all but a spectator.

It must have struck every observer of human character that there are two classes of drunkards in this country. One class is composed of those persons, who, at first being well enough disposed to be temperate in all things, are insensibly led on by the charm of good fellowship to create for themselves an artificial want, which in the end leaves them the helpless victims of a miserable disease: they begin with a little—they continue the draught under the self-deceiving sophism “it’s only a drop”—they fall into excess—they lose all sense of decorum and proper spirit—they become mean and unbashful in their craving after spirituous liquor, which condition unfits them for an upright and honourable course of thought and action in any of the details of daily existence—a mental dissipation accompanies the bodily languor: while the hand trembles, the brain wanders, and the last scene of the tragedy is delirium tremens.

But there is another class of drunkards—God forbid that I should attribute any thing to the decrees of Providence inconsistent with mercy and justice—but I am almost tempted to designate this class the drunkards by necessity. However worldly condition, education, or other causes, may modify the result in individual cases, it is not the less certain that there are persons—very many of them—who appear to have come into the world predisposed to an inordinate desire for intoxicating liquors. These wretched people do not begin with thimblefuls, and end with gills—the stroke seizes them like a thief in the night—sometimes in the prime of manhood—sometimes in the flush of youth—sometimes (it is a fearful truth) in the thoughtlessness of boyhood. It is a passion with them—a madness. You may know one of these unhappy beings, especially if he be a very young man, by the sullen and dogged air with which, early in the morning, he enters the public house, and sits down in solitude and silence to his double-shotted measure of undiluted whisky—whisky is the only drink for one of this calibre—alas! the worst and fiercest stuff that can be made is the most acceptable to him—his palate is too long palled to distinguish between tastes and flavours—it is the *liquid fire* he wants; you may know him at other times by the pitiable imbecility which prompts him in his awful craving to reach his tumbler to his lips with both his hands, till he finishes the draught with all the apparent eagerness of intense thirst; you may know such a one by his frightful sleeps, begun, continued, and closed in terrific dreams! The wife and family of the progressive or occasional drunkard are wretched enough, as every body knows; but, oh! who can possibly estimate the amount of misery which the wife and children of a madman like this are destined to endure.

I have not overdrawn the picture in the abstract—take an individual instance:—

In the spring of 18— I was living, on a visit with a friend, in the neighbourhood of a small country town in one of the most fertile and prosperous districts of the island. The population was almost entirely free from that abject and squalid poverty which is the lot of the Irish peasantry beyond that of all other descriptions of civilized people. I remarked particularly of this neighbourhood that it had a larger proportion of respectable farmers and of that species of country gentle-